



A Day in the Life of a DISTRICT NURSE

'A Day in the Life of' is a series written by experienced community nurses for student nurses to show what working in the community is like.

Personal details

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Job title: Student Specialist Practitioner District Nurse

Location: Gloucestershire

1. What's a typical day for you?

I start at 8am with my first visit. This is normally a diabetic patient needing their blood sugar reading and insulin- or a bowel care procedure. If I am the shift lead I will have messages to deal with such as reallocating visits, managing staffing or allocating visits for patients that need care quickly (blocked catheters or a palliative patient needing medication for symptom control). I then get back into my car and travel to the next scheduled visits, however our planned day can change to visit people who need more urgent care. Lunch is around 1.30-2pm. Handover or "team-time" is a few times a week at 3pm. The day comes to an end at approx. 4pm.

2. What has been your proudest moment in nursing so far?

My proudest moment in nursing so far is taking part in the specialist practitioner district nursing programme. This a 1 year course- at masters level where I undertake 6 post graduate modules to become a specialist practitioner in district nursing. At the end of this course I will have a post within my trust as a Band 6 district nurse leader. This is a huge achievement for me academically, professionally, and personally. It is a very challenging year but will allow me become a competent nurse leader for current and future district nurse teams.

3. What skills set would you expect a student nurse to bring to the role of community nursing?

Community nurses have a high number of clinical skills and competencies-. Student nurses will be able to carry out simple wound care, medication administration via a variety of routes (Patch change, IM/SC injections, suppositories, eye drops), suture removal and female catheter changes (all under supervision). Student nurses should be able to take clinical observations, recognising an unwell or deteriorating patient. Student nurses should be able to demonstrate good communication skills, and be able to work well within a team, including co-ordinating care within the wider MDT and delegating when appropriate.

4. What do you wish you'd known before you started working in the community?

I wish I had known how varied community nursing was and how skilled and busy community nurses are. We do everything from a simple subcutaneous or intramuscular injection, suture removals, catheter changes or venepuncture to more complex nursing needs such as IV antibiotics at home, specialist wound care (VAC/larvae therapy), flushing a central line, disconnecting a chemotherapy infusion, or replenishing a syringe driver, and providing care to someone who is at the end of their life. We work in care homes and patients homes, and travel across the county. I wish I'd known how rewarding but challenging it would be.

5. Any advice for aspiring community nurses?

My advice would be to get a nice comfortable car, and good shoes. Make sure you are comfortable with IT as a lot of time is spent documenting, communication and learning on our laptops. Community nursing is incredibly busy, getting busier every year and as a district nurse you will have a huge range of clinical skills and competencies. This takes time to develop so don't be hard on yourself if you feel overwhelmed at the start- this is normal and it does get better! Make sure you know your boundaries and recognise when you need to ask for help. Documentation is so important, and be organised. Look after yourself. You cannot look after your patients if you don't look after yourself- ALWAYS take your breaks and handover work when needed. You will make mistakes and have good days and bad days- reflect and learn from these where possible- you are only human. Have something outside of work to help you switch off- district nursing can be very difficult at times- especially with our patients who require palliative care. It is a really challenging but rewarding career and you will constantly be learning and developing as a nurse and a person!

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www.qni.org.uk/students

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